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SUBJECT Covert Operations in Nicaragua Alleged

FRANK REYNOLDS: The President of the United States was asked today whether this country is carrying out covert operations against Nicaragua. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense were also asked the same question, and all three gave basically the same answer, no comment, which does not necessarily mean yes, but also may not mean no. So tonight we begin this broadcast with what we have learned about U. S. intentions in Nicaragua and Central America. First, here is Carl Bernstein.

CARL BERNSTEIN: President Reagan, according to high level sources, has authorized an extensive program of covert CIA operations aimed at Nicaragua's Sandinista government. As described to ABC News, the covert operations fall into three categories: paramilitary, political, economic and propaganda.

The paramilitary operations are to be undertaken by a CIA directed force of 500 or more men drawn from the security services of Venezuela, Colombia, Chile and other Latin American countries, by another 1,000 man commando force being trained by Argentina at the behest of the Reagan administration and as reported last month by ABC News White House correspondent Sam Donaldson, and by special action teams of former members of such elite U. S. military units as the Green Berets. These teams, said to be comprised of fewer than a dozen men each, are expected to engage in highly sensitive intelligence collection and demolition work, according to some sources.

The paramilitary operations are to be directed from a chain of commando camps in Honduras, near the Nicaraguan border. Some administration and intelligence officials, contrary to published reports, are attempting to picture the operations as somewhat limited in scope, scaled back, they say, from more ambitious plans